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FM AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS
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RUEHAM/AMEMBASSY AMMAN 6423
RUEHLB/AMEMBASSY BEIRUT 4215
RUEHEG/AMEMBASSY CAIRO 2812
RUEHRH/AMEMBASSY RIYADH 7395
RUEHTV/AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV 1429
RUEHAK/AMEMBASSY ANKARA 4779
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DEPARTMENT FOR PA, NEA/ARN, INR/IC/CD, INR/S:STHIBEAULT AND
JMCCARTER, VOA NEWS CA, NEA/PPD:CBOURGEOIS, DBENZE AND AFERNANDEZ,
IIP/G/NEA-SA RWINCHESTER
WHITE HOUSE FOR NSC
CENTCOM FOR CCPA

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [KMDR](#) [PREL](#) [KPAO](#) [OPRC](#) [SY](#)

SUBJECT: Damascus Media Reaction: Golan Prisoners, Palestinian
Factions, Syria/Turkey, Lebanon, Iraq, Rumsfeld (12/6)

¶1. Summary: Syrian papers on Dec. 6 reported that on Dec. 5 the Syrian Foreign Ministry addressed formal messages to UN SecGen Kofi Annan, the Chairman of the Security Council, the High Commission for Human Rights, and the Human Rights Council, informing them about the poor health of Sitan Nmr Alweli, a Syrian captive in the occupied Syrian Golan. The messages pointed out the humiliating and difficult health conditions in which he is held, along with his comrades, in Israeli prisons, which led to the death of the prisoner Hayel Abu Zeid in June 2005 and are causing the deterioration of the health of Alweli. The messages call on UN commissions to intervene promptly to secure the release and save the lives of Alweli and his comrades, and stress that the UN must oblige Israel to implement UNSC resolution No. 497 and all resolutions of the General Assembly and the Human Rights Council.

Papers also reported a meeting of Palestinian PM Ismael Haneih in Damascus on Dec. 5 with Palestinian factions in Damascus, during which Haneih underlined his government's commitment to protect national rights and principles, especially the right of return, and its support of resistance to liberate occupied lands. In a press conference with the Chairman of the Politburo of HAMAS, Khaled Meshal, and the Assistant Secretary General of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, Talal Naji, Haneih renewed respect for the democratic option and the Palestinian national project, and rejected foreign intervention.

On Syria/Turkish relations, papers reported that Turkish PM Recep Tayyip Erdogan will pay a state visit to Syria on Dec. 6 for talks on the latest regional developments.

Papers also featured the Senate Foreign Relations Committee confirmation hearing of Defense Secretary-designate Robert Gates on Dec. 5, in which he said that a U.S. attack on Syria would unleash a wave of anti-Americanism in the Middle East and would have "dramatic consequences for the US in the Middle East."

End of summary.

¶2. Selected Headlines:

"Turkish PM Recep Tayyip Erdogan is to visit Syria today"

(Government-owned Al-Thawra, 12/6)

"The Foreign Ministry addresses two memos to UN SecGen Kofi Annan and to the Human Rights Council to mediate for the release the Syrian prisoner Sitan Nmr Alweli and his comrades from Israeli jails in occupied Golan" (Government-owned Al-Thawra, 12/6)

"Deputy Foreign Minister Dr. Faisal Miqdad: We support options of the Lebanese people" (Government-owned Al-Thawra, 12/6)

"Palestinian PM Hanieh, Chairman of the Politburo of HAMAS Khaled Meshal and Assistant Secretary General of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine Talal Naji reiterate the importance of dialogue and commitment to Palestinian options" (Government-owned Al-Thawra, 12/6)

"Gates calls for direct dialogue with Syria and Iran. Any military assault against Syria will be costly" (Government-owned Tishreen, 12/6)

"Baker notifies Bush of his Committee's recommendations. Gates, US Defense Secretary designate: Dialogue with Syria and Iran will be useful" (Government-owned Al-Ba'th, 12/6)

"The open sit-in enters its fifth day with strong momentum and remarkable popular participation. Beirut buries the slain protestor. The army warns the government that the Lebanese unrest could get out of control" (Government-owned Al-Ba'th, 12/6)

"The Arab Ministerial Committee on Iraq calls for immediate dismantling of militias and establishing armed forces on national basis" (Government-owned Al-Ba'th, 1/26)

13. Editorial Block Quotes:

"Palestine and the Priority of National Unity"

Umar Jaftali, an editorialist in government-owned Tishreen, wrote (12/6): "National unity is the first priority for Palestinians.... Palestinian divisions would be a gratuitous award for the enemy of the Palestinians and the Arab nation...."

"There is an American-Israeli game to incite Palestinians against one and other and ignite domestic strife and infighting after the Zionist war machine failed to subjugate the Palestinians.... All this under the claim that the Palestinian government is responsible for the suffering of Palestinians...."

"It is a dirty game, the price of which the Palestinian people are paying, in the form of a human disaster that worsens day after day. The question is: Why didn't the Palestinian question see any American step showing good American intentions before the HAMAS government was established...?"

"The problem is not the government, but the colonialist mentality and the Zionist ambitions that deny the rights of others, contrary to international law and UN resolutions...."

"The US Domino Game"

Isam Dari, a commentator in government-owned Tishreen, wrote (12/6): "How does the Lebanese government explain Israel's concern about the protests that the Lebanese opposition is staging...? Do the Lebanese ministers really think they represent the Lebanese people, or most of them, while huge anti-government demonstrations are continuing for the fifth day running...?"

"What is happening in Lebanon is a peaceful popular revolution for a simple national objective, namely, a national unity government...."

"But those who are monopolizing power see this popular demand as a coup against them. They are not ashamed to hurt this popular Lebanese majority as they portray it as a crowd moving aimlessly to implement Syrian-Iranian orders!

"This is not surprising, for those who take instructions from ambassadors, consuls, and high commissioners are trying to shake off this shame by accusing others of it....

"The Lebanese government is sticking to its position upon foreign instructions, so that the dominoes that the Bush administration and the neoconservatives have arranged in this region will not fall, as they fell in Iraq. But we believe that the American domino game has reached its final stages. The people ultimately prevail, no matter what price they pay and sacrifices they make."

"Lebanon Says its Word"

Adnan Mahmud, a columnist in government-owned Al-Thawra, wrote (12/6): "The Lebanese people have gone to the streets to defend Lebanon's freedom, sovereignty, independence, Arabism, and national unity against the Zionist and American invaders and their local agents....

"The people of Lebanon have gone out to chant in the squares of Beirut and frustrate the sick dreams of the 'creative instability' and the new or greater Middle East, just as the valiant resistance did in the south through its historic confrontation of the brutal Zionist attack on the Lebanese people, land, and establishments.

The people of Lebanon have gone out to shout in their faces, without fear or appeasement, 'we will not sell Lebanon to the American-Zionist project no matter what the price,' advising some politicians in the region to stop adding their suspicious fuel to the Zionist-American fire in Lebanon and the region as part of their compliance with the will of the White House, which was miserably defeated in the election, and which failed to the bone in its invasion of Iraq and its war on Afghanistan...."

"Rumsfeld Admits"

Ali Qasim, a commentator in government-owned Al-Thawra, wrote (12/6): "US Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld's admission that US strategy in Iraq was a failure appeared as an attempt to justify what cannot be justified, or an effort to tone down the impact of the current US crisis....

"The admission brings to mind what many people have said, namely, that Americans are sinking in the Iraqi quagmire.... This dictates key changes not only in form but also in content....

"Syria warned Americans of this end before the invasion and drew attention to it after the war, but the drums of war and the joy of swift victory did not allow anyone to hear or see the facts at that time....

"Rumsfeld's admission clearly reflects the permanent condition that affects American officials when they get ready to leave their posts. They return to their senses when it is too late...."

Corbin